

Ways to help those in need in Oglethorpe County

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The Oglethorpe Echo

Finding assistance can be an overwhelming task for those who need food, basic supplies, family services and more. About 12.3%, or 1,823, of the 14,825 people who lived in Oglethorpe County experienced poverty in 2020, the most recent data available from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Here's a look at nonprofits, government organizations, churches and other institutions that offer a variety of assistance, from diapers to hot meals to free technical classes. These resources are typically offered year-round. The list includes contact information and ways to support these efforts.

*If you know of other resources not listed, please contact us at coveringpovertysite@gmail.com.

SENIORS

Oglethorpe County Senior Citizens Center
19 Oglethorpe Drive, Crawford
Contact: Corie Robinson, director
706-743-8848
crobinson@oglethorpecountyga.gov
oglethorpecountyga.gov/seniors

The Senior Citizens Center provides a variety of services to individuals aged 60 and older in Oglethorpe County. Seniors who can drive and walk into the center can fill out a membership application in person. Those clients, also known as "congregate clients," can come to the center four days a week to receive a hot meal for lunch and do an activity with the other seniors. The center is part of the Oglethorpe County government. Homebound clients should call the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (706-583-2546). The commission will fill out an assessment report and send the information to Corie Robinson, the center's director. She will visit the client's home to set them up to receive a weekly delivery of frozen meals to last the whole week. To



SARAH DONEHOO/THE OGLETHORPE ECHO

Erin Campbell, founder of the Athens Area Diaper Bank, moves boxes labeled for Oglethorpe County at the organization's warehouse in Bogart. The nonprofit sends free diapers to locations in Oglethorpe County.

sign up, seniors should provide a photo ID, a list of emergency contacts, a list of medications and an insurance card.

There is a \$40 annual membership fee, which can be made in payments throughout the year. If someone is unable to pay, there are sponsorships for free memberships available. Robinson said to contact her if the membership fee is a barrier and she will provide assistance.

There is also a donation of \$2 for every meal, \$5 for non-member family members and friends.

The center takes individuals to doctor appointments and to the grocery store once a week. The center requires as much notification in advance about doctor appointments as possible.

The center also takes trips twice a month. For example, in October, it visited a pumpkin patch and Peggy's Restaurant in Wrens, Georgia. The trips require a \$3 donation.

Additionally, the center automatically signs up members for the Northeast Georgia Energy Assistance Program. Members who qualify can get \$500-\$1,000 toward their gas and power bill, and the money is applied to power bills throughout the year.

The center also accepts dona-

tions to expand its services and bingo prizes. You can drop off or mail donations to the center.

The calendar of events and the menu for each week is printed in The Oglethorpe Echo.

"Everyone, every staff member here, is here because they care, and they love each and every one of these members and our clients and I cannot think of anything better than working in a place where you get to give back to the community that you live in," Robinson said. "You know, it's just fantastic. I can't even almost put it into words."

FAMILY SERVICES

Family Connection
Oglethorpe.gafcp.org
Contact: April Moore, coordinator
amoore@oglethorpe.k12.ga.us
762-445-4020

Family Connection helps families locate and apply for local and state organizations. It can assist families with filling out applications for food stamps and healthcare benefits and finding services like local food pantries, rental assistance programs and more.

Family Connection can also provide links to online resources, such as findhelp.org and see if

families meet the criteria for these programs.

There is no cost for assistance.

If coordinator April Moore doesn't have an immediate answer, she said she will research and reach out to her partners and organizations in the area.

"It's just like a big family here," she said. "People really want to help and if there's not something that we know automatically, or that the person would qualify for, so to speak, people just want to help and sometimes we just figure out a way and make it happen by just talking and you know, seeing if we can all pull together to give that family or that person the support they need."

Moore said a new effort, the Athletic Snack and Hydration Program, seeks donations of money and supplies from local businesses and community members to help sponsor one Oglethorpe County High School sports team per season. It provides the students with healthy snacks and food during practices and games.

Oglethorpe County Extension and 4-H Office
extension.uga.edu/county-offices/oglethorpe.html
706-743-8341
55 Oglethorpe Drive, Crawford

The extension's Cooking to Share Program provides the meals cooked by youth students to families in need identified by the Oglethorpe school district. The program is an effort to foster students' confidence with cooking skills, kitchen safety and to also teach them healthy living lessons.

Through this program so far, approximately \$1,600 has been donated and 80 to 90 families supported. Around 25 kids are involved at a single cooking event held once a month and they prepare five-course meals for the families listed.

Athens Area Diaper Bank
athensareadiaperbank.com
130 Conway Drive, Suite B, Bogart
Contact: Erin Campbell, founder
706-621-7265

The Athens Area Diaper Bank is a resource for families struggling with the expense of diapers. Over 15 total organizations partner with the bank and distribute the diapers in multiple counties. The Athens Area Diaper Bank began collecting diapers in 2015, said founder Erin Campbell. The Food Bank of Northeast Georgia became a fiscal sponsor in 2018, making the bank an official nonprofit with a space based in Oconee County.

"Right now we gotta take care of our existing service area which includes Oglethorpe County," Campbell said.

Here are Oglethorpe County locations that provide diapers from the diaper bank and where families can pick up diapers during business hours. If transportation is not available, call 706-621-7265 to request delivery.

Deliverance Temple Ministries
220 Smithonia Road, Winterville, GA 30683
Oglethorpe County Health Department WIC (Women, Infants and Children): 305 Union Point Road, Lexington, GA 30648

Community Christmas of Oglethorpe County also partners with the diaper bank to distribute

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free diapers to families who have been interviewed for assistance. Oglethorpe County residents can receive diapers by contacting co-chair Catherine Bowen Drewry at 706-201-7241 to plan an interview for assistance eligibility.

Brightpaths
brightpathsathens.org
1450 Barnett Shoals Road, Athens
706-546-9713
info@pcaathens.org

Brightpaths Athens offers multiple free programs to serve families and parents in several counties, including Oglethorpe County. The Healthy Families program teaches child development, proper discipline, healthy parent-child interactions and more through in-home visits by Brightpaths' family support specialists.

Brightpaths holds parenting classes at its Athens location in both Spanish and English, as well as online sessions when needed. It also offers the First Step program in which new moms and the families of newborns at Athens-Clarke County hospitals are visited within 12 to 48 hours of giving birth.

A family resource closet is at the Brightpaths Athens location. It is open from 10 a.m.-noon Fridays or by appointment. It has items such as pack and plays, diapers, baby food, formula and strollers. Parents can take one can of formula and one pack of diapers per week as supplies last, and the other items are given as needed.

Brightpaths also has a car seat tech who can show families how to install them.

To learn how to access these programs, visit brightpathsathens.org or call 706-546-9713. Go to the "connect with us" page and fill out the registration form (brightpathsathens.org/programs/register-online). You will receive a phone call from Brightpaths after registering.

Brightpaths accepts monetary donations, as well as donations to the resource closet; visit brightpathsathens.org/get-involved/do-

nate. You can find a list of needed items at brightpathsathens.org/parents/shop.

Resource closet donations can be dropped off at the center from 10 a.m. to noon Friday or by appointment. There are also volunteer opportunities for the Brightpaths fall festival and a holiday party for the families they serve.

There are also ongoing opportunities to help with administrative work in the office or to staff the resource closet on Friday mornings.

"I think it's important because all parents need help," said Sallie Starrett, executive director. "And some parents kind of have that support system built in their families or their friends, and some parents don't have support built in, and so that's where Brightpaths steps in, and we offer the connection, education and support that all families need. So we're trying to kind of decrease the stigma of asking for help as a mom or dad."

EDUCATION

Lena Wise Community Center
facebook.com/Lenawisecc
134 Church St., Crawford
706-614-1044
lenawisecc@gmail.com

The Lena Wise Community Center, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, provides a space for several helpful educational and senior programs accessible to Oglethorpe County residents.

"The reason for the Lena Wise Community Center is to operate this building on behalf of the nonprofits that make up the organization," said Cary Fordyce, the nonprofit's chairman. "It acts as the home base for all the other organizations."

These include free GED classes taught remotely by Athens Technical College. Adults who want to enroll in the GED program should contact Vicki Ussery (706-552-0949), a GED course instructor who also provides tutoring in a renovated room of the center.

County residents can also enroll in free technical skill classes like welding safety, cutting and grinding and gas metal arc welding from Athens Technical College by calling 706-552-0949. Seniors can enroll at any time.

The center hosts meetings of the Oglethorpe Rotary Club, which charters the Boy Scouts chapter and sponsors high school students with scholarships.

The Athens Community Council on Aging offers the Senior Community Service Employment Program for unemployed residents over the age of 55. People can contact 706-549-4850 to apply for part-time job training working in local agencies. For a full and up-to-date list of organizations, contact the Athens Community Council for Aging at 706-621-0001.

Action Athens Inc.
actionathens.org
2440 West Broad St., Suite 5, Athens
706-546-8293

Action Athens provides higher education and community services. According to the website, its mission is to "break to help individuals and families break the cycle of poverty and achieve their greatest potential."

Action Athens can help with rent, energy and mortgage expenses, or employment supplies depending on individual and family needs, said Margo Fowler, a Community Services Block Grant and Emergency Food and Shelter Program manager for Action Athens.

Its food rescue program, called Full Plate, picks up unused food from commercial sources and delivers the food to other nonprofit agencies, such as the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia, that focus on food distribution.

Weatherization is a service that makes low-income homes more energy efficient by increasing energy efficiency and safety through services including insulation, air leakage reduction, smoke detectors, and weather stripping.

Individuals can make an appointment for an evaluation of goals and needs by reaching out to Nesial Miller, coordinator for Oglethorpe County, at 706-453-4141.

FOOD

Lexington Baptist Church
lbc-lex.org/mobile-food-ministry
103 West Church St., Lexington
706-743-8216

Lexington Baptist Church's mobile food ministry is held on the second Monday of each month. Food distributions start at 3:30 p.m. and are served on a first-come, first-serve basis. Individuals can pick up nonperishable food items such as breads, soups and other pre-packaged items. Food is placed in crates and delivered to vehicles.

Its Facebook page (facebook.com/LBCoglethorpe) lists dates of the food distribution.

Burts United Methodist Church
ngumc.org/churchdetail/2934798
77 Veribest-Enterprise Road, Carlton
706-296-0415

Burts United Methodist Church has a monthly food pantry. Individuals can stop by and pick up food at the church from 10 a.m.-noon. Nonperishable food items are

placed in boxes and given to individuals upon arrival.

Visit Berts United Methodist Church on Facebook (facebook.com/BurtsUMC/) for food distribution dates.

Plowshare
plowshare.org
925 Athens Road, Crawford
706-255-9005

Plowshare is a gardening organization with free membership. Community members can attend their monthly potluck held on the second Monday at 6:30 p.m. at the Farm Bureau in Crawford.

Plowshare offers free produce seeds and provides a space where people can reap the benefits of growing their own food. Experts often attend meetings to speak and provide guidance. People can find farming information on the Plowshare website.

Steven and Vickie Coker, co-founders of Plowshare, welcome everyone to participate.

"Our programs are around how to grow herbs, how to dry herbs, how to grow vegetables, how to can them, and food preservation," he said.

This story was written by the Covering Poverty project, which is part of the Cox Institute's Journalism Writing Lab at the University of Georgia.

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